

Re: Health care providers support HUSKY expansion to CT residents without regard to immigration status

We write to the Connecticut State Human Services Committee to express our strong support for legislation that would expand legislation for HUSKY eligibility to all low-income CT residents, without regard to immigration status. We recognize expanding access to the undocumented immigrant population who have been excluded will be a long-term process. This session we urge the Connecticut state legislature to support H.B. 6616: AN ACT CONCERNING EXPANSION OF HUSKY HEALTH BENEFITS TO THOSE INELIGIBLE DUE TO IMMIGRATION STATUS.. We also fully support future bills that would expand Medicaid to ALL undocumented adults living in Connecticut.

As health care providers, we recognize our responsibility to care for all patients, regardless of race, income, or immigration status. Unfortunately, our state laws do not reflect that same commitment. While the uninsured rate in Connecticut is approximately 6.3%, an estimated 57% of undocumented immigrants in our state are uninsured. Currently, undocumented immigrants are excluded from participating in HUSKY, the state's Medicaid program for low-income residents, or from purchasing private health insurance on Access Health CT, the state marketplace established by the Affordable Care Act. Our laws have eliminated the pathways to reliable health insurance for undocumented individuals. Instead, immigrant communities are forced to rely upon under-resourced clinics and emergency care through hospitals. We as health care providers have all seen the consequences when our patients' illnesses go untreated, causing catastrophic complications and, it is important to note, requiring expensive hospital-based care that is ultimately supported by the state. These consequences are preventable, but the prescription must be written at the level of state policy.

Connecticut has already begun to recognize the moral responsibility and sensibility of making sure all communities in the state have access to health care. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Connecticut has used Emergency Medicaid funds to cover COVID-19 testing and treatment for residents who didn't qualify for Medicaid based on immigration status. This not only removed barriers to receiving preventive care and treatment, but also prevented COVID-19 spread in our communities. Further, the state passed bi-partisan legislation to declare racism as a public health crisis. There is no clearer path to begin addressing systemic inequities in our healthcare system than to provide health insurance for undocumented children and their families -- the vast majority of whom are persons of color.

As health care providers, we understand the devastating human consequences of restricting access to health care. We ask you to support legislation that would remove immigration status from HUSKY eligibility rules and would expand healthcare access to our most vulnerable community members. We thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Signed,

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Last updated 2/14/2023 5:25 PM (signees updated regularly)

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